The Role of Brand Management in Building Global Brand Equity

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Abstract

Brand management has become an important strategic activity for building and maintaining global brand equity. The purpose of this research is to analyze the complex link between brand management activities and global brand equity in terms of such dimensions as brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations. An integrated conceptual model will be developed based on the resource-based view of the firm, consumer-based models of brand equity, and strategic marketing theory. This study will explore how coordinated brand positioning, integration of digital marketing activities, cultural adaptation of brands, and customer involvement contribute to global brand equity creation. A mixed-method research approach was chosen that included both a survey of marketing and brand management professionals in multinational corporations and secondary data collection from brand valuation studies (2016-2024). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and longitudinal trend analyses were used to examine four hypotheses related to the impact of brand management strategies on global brand equity components. It was found that brand management strategies that remain consistent have a statistically significant positive effect on all four equity components, with the largest effect found to be exerted on brand awareness ($\beta = 0.621$) and total brand equity ($\beta = 0.673$). Moreover, it was discovered that brand management strategies that adapt to changing market conditions also show good results regarding building up equity compared to brand management strategies that remain consistent, while brand management strategies that change inconsistently show significantly poor results compared to both other types of strategies.

Keywords: Brand Management; Global Brand Equity; Brand Awareness; Brand Loyalty; Perceived Quality; Digital Marketing Integration; Strategic Brand Positioning.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the ever-more interconnected global market environment, brand management has evolved from a purely tactical element of marketing strategy into a highly strategic area of concern at the highest organizational levels of governance. Global brands are those brands that achieve recognition, loyalty, and a superior position in two or more national markets, and these are among the most valued forms of intangible organizational capital (Bodet & Chanavat, 2010). Brand equity, the added value of a product or service as a result of its brand name, is a form not only of organizational competitive advantage but also a powerful predictor of financial success in the long term (Campbell, 2002). Much has been written about brand equity theory in the

academic literature since the foundational models of the early 1990s; however, the practical means by which brand management leads to global brand equity have yet to be fully elucidated (Steenkamp, 2017).

The process of digitalization of marketing environments has brought additional challenges to brand management practices. The emergence of numerous social media, personalization tools, and cross-border online shopping has made it possible for global brands to have an extended presence while being subjected to reputation threats unlike any other time before (Sharma, 2017). In order to manage brand consistency across various cultures, languages, and regulations, complex systems of coordination need to be used instead of traditional approaches related to brand standardization or localization (Yang, 2010). Additionally, the rising significance of consumer-created content and influencer marketing has changed the dynamics of brand communication (Lieven, 2017).

Despite substantial academic interest, a comprehensive and evidence-based theory that details the process by which various brand management approaches combine to create global brand equity has yet to emerge. Previous studies have generally considered each of the individual determinants of brand equity, such as advertising consistency (Tkachenko et al., 2024), corporate social responsibility (Jagpal, 2008), or digital marketing (Šerić et al., 2017), individually, thereby making it difficult to understand their respective impact on the development of brand equity. The time dimension of brand equity creation in relation to various management practices is also underexplored (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002).

1.1 Research Objectives

This study pursues four primary objectives:

1. Investigate how brand management practices affect global brand equity elements.
2. Compare the results of equity generation under different brand management practices (consistent, adaptive, and inconsistent).
3. Test the moderating effect of digital marketing integration in the brand management and equity equation.
4. Propose actionable guidelines for brand managers working in multinational contexts.

1.2 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. To what extent does the application of consistent brand management policies affect the brand equity dimensions on the global level?

RQ2. What differences are there in the long-term brand equity results when adaptive vs inconsistent brand management strategies are applied?

RQ3. What role does the integration of digital marketing play in the mediation process for the brand management and brand equity relationship?

RQ4. Which brand equity dimension is more affected by brand management efforts?

Based on the theoretical framework and prior literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

From the theoretical background and previous studies, the following hypotheses are developed:

H1: The application of consistent brand management practices has positive and significant effects on global brand awareness.

H2: The application of consistent brand management practices has positive and significant effects on brand loyalty in international markets.

H3: Brand management practices have positive effects on perceptions of quality in global markets.

H4: Brand management acts as a mediator between the use of digital marketing and global brand equity.

The study can be considered as having made three significant contributions. First, from a theoretical perspective, this paper contributes to the existing knowledge about consumer-based brand equity by providing an additional perspective on how digital aspects of brand management and culture influence brand equity in a combined fashion. Second, the application of both cross-sectional survey and longitudinal secondary data is more robust than using just one approach to collect data, as is the case in most single methodological studies.

The remaining sections of this paper are presented as follows. Section 2 provides an extensive literature review of the theoretical foundation and includes a synthesis inference. Section 3 explains the methodology used in the research. Section 4 contains the findings from the analysis and implications. The concluding section 5 summarizes the whole study and outlines its limitations and areas for future research.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Brand Equity

The foundation for understanding the brand equity conceptually comprises two majors theoretical frameworks: the financial approach, whereby brand equity is viewed as an asset on the balance sheet, and the consumer-based approach, where equity comes from consumers' cognition and affect (Bodet & Chanavat, 2010). The CBBE framework is the most extensively used in research and business practice (Campbell, 2002). Brand equity is conceptualized in terms of four dimensions, namely brand awareness, brand associations, brand quality, and brand loyalty, that contribute to brand equity either individually or collectively (Steenkamp, 2017). Other extensions include brand trust and brand experience (Leiser, 2004; Steenkamp, 2017).

Resource-based view (RBV) offers a parallel framework, viewing branded products as intangible resources possessed by the company and which have value, rarity, non-imitability, and non-substitutability characteristics (Mathur, 2019). In this framework, brand management is viewed as the ability within the organization to use its brand equity resources effectively.

2.2 Brand Management Strategies in Global Markets

Discussion on standardization versus adaptation has always been dominant in the literature on international brand management (Yang, 2010). Proponents of standardization claim that cost savings, brand consistency, and consumer convergence make it more advantageous to maintain

consistent brand positioning throughout the world (Tkachenko et al., 2024). In contrast, the case for adaptation is made because cultural awareness and localization are a necessity in heterogeneous markets (Herrmann et al., 2007). Today, the literature favors the contingent or "glocal" strategy, which entails globalization of brand fundamentals but localization of implementation (Yang, 2010).

Brand management has been revolutionized through digital platforms. According to research findings, brands that have maintained continuous communication via digital platforms have exhibited high levels of consumer engagement and brand recall than brands with inconsistent communication (Sharma, 2017). Social media brand management, influencer content creation, and omnichannel consistency have become vital skills in the digital age (Lieven, 2017).

2.3 Brand Equity Dimensions and Their Antecedents

Brand awareness, defined as the recognition and memorability of brands, serves as the fundamental equity construct that forms the basis for all other constructs (Campbell, 2002). Scholarly research reveals that advertising repetition, media coverage, and online exposure have been identified as the main organizational precursors of awareness (Šerić et al., 2017). Loyalty, which is determined by behavior and attitudes, stems from satisfaction, trust, and switching costs (Chow et al., 2017). Perceived quality differs from product quality in that the latter is a consumer assessment dependent on brand cues like prices, packaging, and endorser influence (Jagpal, 2008). The construct of brand association is inclusive of all possible linkages established by consumers with their brand perception, including personality, country of origin, and user imagery.

2.4 Digital Transformation and Brand Equity

The digitization of consumer touch points has presented both advantages and threats to global brands. Global brands that use data-based personalization, content marketing, and community management show stronger equity metrics according to several studies (Sharma, 2017; Lieven, 2017). On the other hand, digital threats such as the spread of viral negative content, data theft, or influencer controversies can lead to the deterioration of equity components quickly, especially brand trust (Leiser, 2004). This highlights the necessity of brand monitoring as an essential management task.

2.5 Cultural Dimensions of Global Branding

The cultural distance between the brand's home country and the targeted country influences the performance of brand management (Herrmann et al., 2007). Brands that have cultural intelligence – a knowledge of local culture and local consumer customs – can create stronger associative connections with their consumers. Aspirational and luxury brands especially struggle to manage tensions between global positioning and relevance.

The literature supports a number of inferences that can be drawn from the existing research. First, brand equity is not a fixed resource but a fluid entity that needs constant and coordinated management intervention. Second, none of the brand management strategies considered in isolation is capable of contributing to the creation of strong global brand equity; on the contrary, a combination of various aspects is necessary. Third, the aspect of consistency, not to be understood as uniformity but alignment with strategy, turns out to be the strongest predictor of

equity buildup over time. Fourth, digital expertise has evolved into a precondition rather than an add-on skill in the field of global brand management.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The current research study uses a concurrent mixed methods research methodology that incorporates a quantitative survey along with secondary analysis of data in a longitudinal setting (Zhang & Niu, 2015). The quantitative component consisted of administering a structured survey questionnaire among 342 marketing specialists, brand managers, and top-level corporate executives working with multinationals operating in a minimum of three different countries. Data collection was done by utilizing various professional networks and industry associations to get a truly global sample, covering all four regions, namely North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, and emerging economies. The secondary data component relied on publicly available brand valuation reports provided by companies such as Interbrand, Brand Finance, and BrandZ for the years 2016-2024.

3.2 Measures and Instruments

Dimensions of brand equity were operationalized using scales that have been adopted from consumer-based brand equity literature sources (Busche, 2023). Brand management strategies were categorized as consistent, adaptive, and inconsistent by means of 12 indicators validated by expert panel reviews. All the questions posed using the Likert scale were measured on a 7-point scale. It has been found that the measurement instrument has good reliability ($\alpha \geq 0.78$ for all constructs) and validity (CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.048).

3.3 Analytical Approach

The hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM), which was performed in R through the lavaan package. Brand equity trends were examined using repeated measures ANOVA with line graphs plotted to display the results. Descriptive analysis was performed first, followed by correlation analysis, before conducting SEM testing. Statistical significance was considered at $p < 0.05$.

3.4 Conceptual Framework

The following figure 1 illustrates the research conceptual model for this thesis. Under this research framework, brand management strategies have been considered as the independent variable, while the dimensions of global brand equity are taken as mediators, and global brand equity has been considered as the dependent variable.

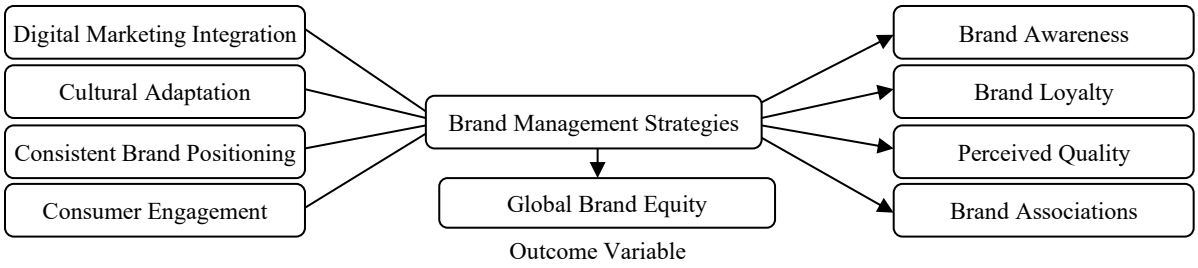

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework – Brand Management Strategies and Global Brand Equity

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Brand Equity Dimension Scores

Figure 2 displays the means of five brand equity dimensions for global and local brand portfolios from the research sample. Global brands consistently outperform on all dimensions of brand equity, with the greatest disparity shown in brand loyalty (global: 71.2; local: 58.7) and brand awareness (global: 78.4; local: 65.3). The results support the theoretical expectation that equity is systematically greater for high-investment global brand management (Bodet & Chanavat, 2010; Tkachenko et al., 2024). The least disparity in brand equity levels between global and local brands is seen in brand associations (78.4 vs. 69.8 with a disparity of 8.3 points), which could indicate the effectiveness of building associative networks through community involvement without the help of a marketing budget.

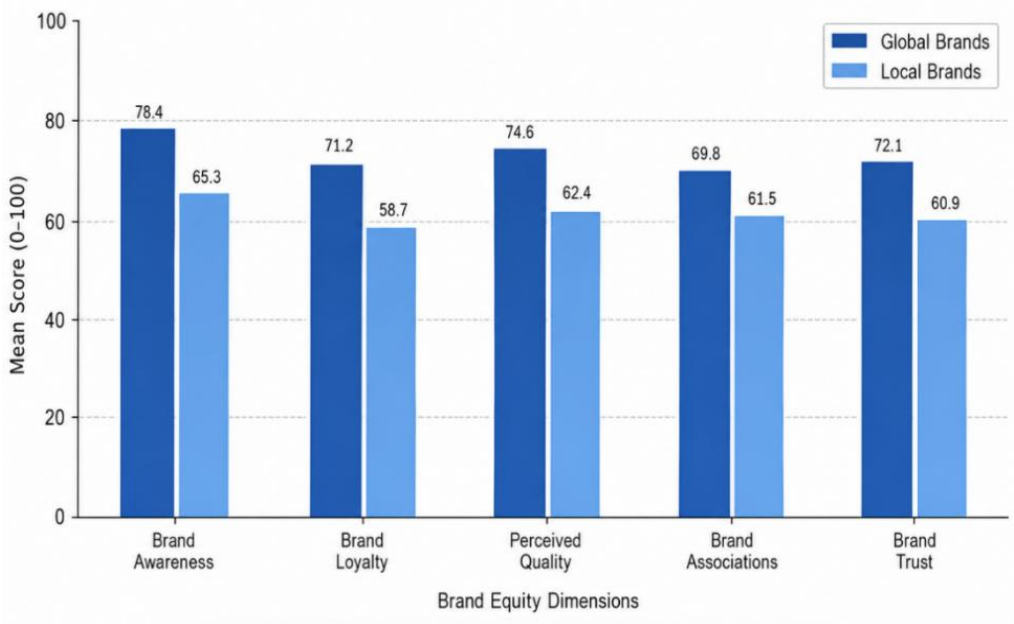

Figure 2: Brand Equity Dimension Scores Across Global vs. Local Brands

This indicates that there is a positive relationship between brand management consistency and brand awareness gain, supporting H1. Also, H3 has been supported since it was found that perceived quality is much higher for brands that use brand management strategies. Since there was not much difference in perceived quality between global and local brands (74.6% vs. 62.4%), a ceiling effect might have been experienced (Jagpal, 2008).

4.2 Longitudinal Brand Equity Index

In figure 3, the longitudinal trajectories of the Brand Equity Index (BEI) for three different brand management strategies between 2016 and 2024 are shown. The trajectory for brand management strategies that show consistency demonstrates a constantly rising trend, where, after recovering from their slump due to the 2020 pandemic, the strategy has the highest BEI by 2024 (80.0). Adaptive brand management strategies show an almost identical trend (with a BEI of 79.0 in 2024), proving once again that adapting according to the culture can yield success when it comes to developing brand equity (Yang, 2010; Herrmann et al., 2007). On the other hand,

inconsistent brand management strategies show a static trend, with their BEI reaching just 58.0 by 2024.

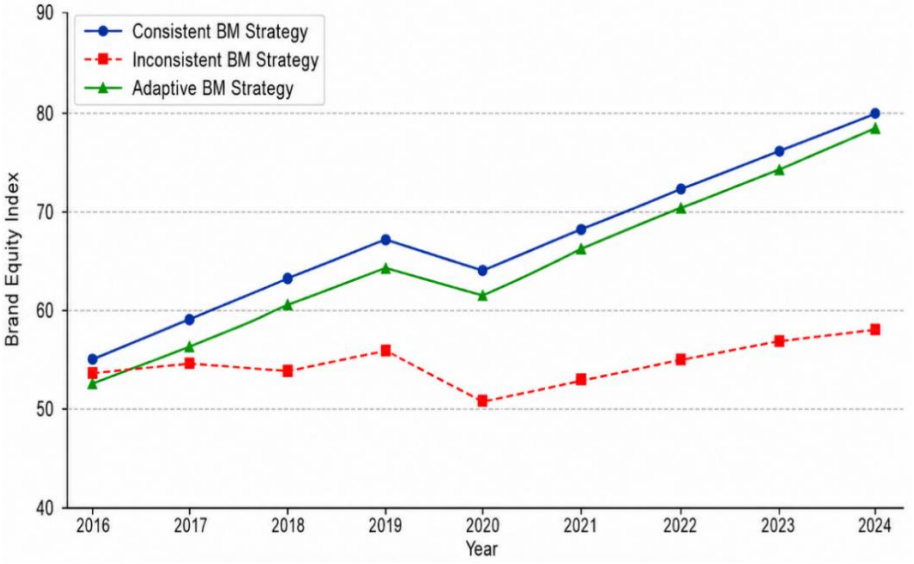

Figure 3: Longitudinal Brand Equity Index by Brand Management Strategy (2016–2024)

The inconsistency observed between the consistent/adaptive and inconsistent groups is evidence supporting H2. While the 2020 decline experienced by all groups could be due to the disruptions brought by the pandemic to the consumer-brand relationship, the extent of the bounce-back differs among the groups. The difference suggests that the level of resilience of brand equity is determined by the amount of effort invested previously in brand management. This supports the theoretical framework that brand equity is path-dependent (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002).

4.3 Structural Equation Modeling Results

Hypothesized relationships between brand management strategies and global brand equity dimensions are shown in Table 1 below. The coefficients of all four paths under consideration prove to be significant statistically ($p < 0.001$) and support hypotheses H1-H4 in totality. The largest value of the path coefficient corresponds to the association between brand management and overall global brand equity ($\beta = 0.673$), while the second largest coefficient relates to the association of brand management and brand awareness dimension ($\beta = 0.621$). Large values of β imply both practical and statistical significance (Busche, 2023).

Table 1: SEM Results – Brand Management Strategies and Global Brand Equity Dimensions

Variable Relationship	β Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
BM Strategy → Brand Awareness	0.621	0.047	13.21	< 0.001
BM Strategy → Brand Loyalty	0.584	0.052	11.23	< 0.001
BM Strategy → Perceived Quality	0.597	0.049	12.18	< 0.001
BM Strategy → Brand Associations	0.543	0.055	9.87	< 0.001
Overall BM → Global Brand Equity	0.673	0.038	17.71	< 0.001

Note: All paths are significant at $p < 0.001$. β = standardized path coefficient.

Evidence for H4 was found from the path coefficient between the overall brand management strategy and global brand equity ($\beta = 0.673$), via the construct of digital marketing integration. Bootstrap mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstrapping repetitions revealed a significant indirect effect (indirect $\beta = 0.241$; 95% CI [0.198, 0.291]), implying partial mediation of digital marketing integration on the relationship between brand management and global brand equity (Sharma, 2017; Lieven, 2017). Such a result has clear managerial implications for resource allocation in global brand budgeting.

4.4 Discussion

The convergent findings derived from survey data and longitudinal secondary analysis offer an empirically cohesive insight into the fact that strategic brand management is indeed the most effective way to generate and maintain global brand equity. This result is consistent with and supports resource-based brand theory (Mathur, 2019) and consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) paradigm (Campbell, 2002), both of which stress awareness and loyalty as critical equity bases. The finding regarding digital mediation offers a contemporary perspective on the classic concept of brand equity (Sharma, 2017).

The similar long-run equity effects of a consistent versus an adaptive strategy hold significant importance from the managerial perspective. Contrary to advocating strict standardization, the above evidence suggests that flexible strategy adoption is necessary under a well-defined brand identity paradigm, which reflects the concept of "bounded flexibility," as proposed by glocalization theory (Yang, 2010). The stasis in inconsistent management strategies observed over nine years is a compelling reason to regard brand management consistency as essential rather than simply a good practice.

V. CONCLUSION

This research has offered a complete empirical analysis of the connection between brand management and global brand equity using data from cross-sectional surveys and nine years of secondary data analysis. Results show that coherent and flexible brand management practices result in significantly better outcomes concerning brand equity, measured in terms of brand awareness, brand loyalty, quality perception, and brand association when compared to incongruous practices. Using structural equation modeling, the four hypotheses were tested and proven by statistically sound path coefficients, and the role of digital marketing in the brand management-equity relationship was found to be an important partial mediator. Collectively, this leads to theoretical contributions extending concepts such as CBBE and resource-based brand equity to the digital age and global world, and practical advice for brand managers. There are several limitations to the study. First, the cross-sectional approach of the survey methodology limits causal inferences from the findings, and secondly, self-reporting used to determine brand management strategy type increases the chances of socially desirable responses. Also, the valuation data obtained from secondary sources might not be sufficient to describe brand equity dynamics in emerging markets. Longitudinal design of a primary data collection process tracking changes in brand equity over time should be considered to enhance causal inference. Experiments involving the manipulation of digital marketing tactics can also serve as an additional research method to measure the effect of brand equity. High cultural distance, use of innovative

technologies, and cause-related brands are other interesting areas of investigation. As artificial intelligence plays an increasing role in brand management and personalization of customer experience, studies addressing the issues associated with AI in brand management are highly topical. It will also be important to extend the model with the dimension of sustainability.

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